

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

JUNE/JULY 2023

Volume 66, Number 6



"It must never be forgotten that we ourselves are both actors and spectators in the drama of existence."

-Niels Bohr



### Contents:

Valdez Glacier peaks, Central Chugach Mountains

Peak of the Month: Claxton Peak (10130 feet), Saint Elias Mountains

Cover Photo: Steve Koeritz during a summer training course, rappelling near the Mint Hut. Photo by Matt Nedom.



# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

[www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org)

*"To maintain, promote, and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating, and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering."*

Full issues of *the Scree* will resume when enough volunteer time is found for monthly editing, layout, and distribution duties. This is an 8+ hour per month time commitment appreciated by the entire membership.

To volunteer, please write to [board@mtnclubak.org](mailto:board@mtnclubak.org), or [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com)

## GENERAL MEETING

General meetings will resume in September. Keep an eye out for summer events!

The September 6 general meeting will include a vote to allow the board to explore adding a part-time paid administrator position to the club leadership. After discussion, the board has concluded this is an option to address membership needs and constraints on volunteer time.

## Call for Volunteers

Everything the MCA provides is built by volunteers. We're currently seeking folks for these roles and more:

**Board Members:** Elections are coming up in October and multiple current board members are planning to step down for a break. If you're interested, please consider serving a 2-year term.

More info to come in the next issue.

## Scree Editing and Layout

**Webmaster:** responsible for administering website content and member accounts via Squarespace and Memberspace. Time commitment: 1-2 hours per month minimum, with a stack of projects and ideas waiting if you want more!

**Spokesperson:** [info@mtnclubak.org](mailto:info@mtnclubak.org) gets dozens of questions every summer from locals and tourists, mostly asking about hut reservations and trip planning. We're looking for someone positive and patient to field these emails, and forward more specific questions to the board. Time commitment: 1 hour per month?

## 'Gratz to Glatz

On July 9, 2023 Dan Glatz summited Bellicose Peak (7640 feet), along with Brendan Lee, Nathan Hebda, and Alex McCready. With that Dan completed climbing all peaks of the 21 Western Chugach summits that rise above 7,000 feet.

Brendan Lee writes: "It took Dan years of hard work, bushwhacking, choss tossing and route research/planning. Dan constantly brings the stoke and is a great climbing partner and friend."

The 21-peak list was published by Tim Kelley in the April 1994 *Scree*:

8005	Bashful Peak	7465	Troublesome Peak
7950	Baleful Peak	7450	West Kiliak
7640	Bellicose Peak	7280	Beelzebub Peak
7549	Hunter's Peak	7265	Mountaineer's Peak
7535	Mt. Yukla	7250	Benign Peak
7530	Mt. Rumble	7240	Devil's Club Peak
7522	Bold Peak	7190	Mt. Soggy
		7150	East Kiliak
		7135	Whiteout Peak
		7126	Benevolent Peak
		7050	Icicle Peak
		7040	Peril Peak
		7030	Korohusk Peak
		7005	Insignificant Peak

Dan on the summit of Troublesome Peak (7465 feet).  
Photo by Brendan Lee

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For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit <https://www.mtnclubak.org/membership>



Scree—June/July 2023

Check Facebook for last-minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.



# Summer Updates...

## Summer Mountaineering School

*Text by Matt Nedom*

The morning of Friday, July 14, seven of us began our 8 mile hike in, with 2900 feet up at the end, to the Mint Hut in the Talkeetna Mountains, carrying heavy packs for our 5 night stay. I was helping Dave Staeheli, a well experienced guide, instruct the five other members of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska in mountaineering skills.

We stayed at our base, the club's Mint Hut, though a couple people did bring tents to stay outside the hut.

Participants were Steve Koeritz, Allison Beeman, Ed Colvin, Elspeth Allen, and Jason Chen.

The wet weather we had been experiencing this summer was forecast to continue for our week in the mountains. Saturday it rained hard all day. We were fortunate to be able to be inside the hut to work on rope skills.

Cory Hinds, another long time MCA member, came up for a few days to help with training.

The weather displayed her beauty, presenting us, through clouds, fog and even some clear sky, a wonderous show of the surrounding creeks, lakes, moraines, mountains- the mint peaks, and the Mint Glacier.

## Annual Flattop Solstice Hike

A dozen or so hardy souls turned up for good times and a free wind massage on June 21st. Thanks to all who brought treats, especially Andrew Holman for contributing a keg of homebrewed beer and Nathan Pooler for hauling it up the mountain.



*Photo by Peter Taylor.*

Allison, Steve, Elspeth, Dave, and Ed

*Photo by Matt Nedom.*





# Ramsey-Rutherford Mining Area Peaks, Valdez Glacier, Central Chugach Mountains

Text and Photos by Mat Brunton



*Jess Tran on Sourdough Ridge.*

Prospectors Peak (5516') is one of the few named (on USGS map) summits in the Valdez, Alaska area Central Chugach. The more striking peak to its left (west), when viewed from the road system in the Valdez area, is unnamed as far as I know. As are the two higher and more prominent peaks to its right (east). These four 500'+ prominence peaks comprise what I refer to as the "Prospectors Massif." The highest and most prominent peak of the massif is the one just right (east) of Prospectors when viewed from the road system: Peak 5706' (Sourdough Peak). The second highest is 5600'+ Cheechako Peak, which is east of Sourdough. It's debatable which peak is the third highest: Prospectors or its neighbor to the west: 5500'+ Siltstone Peak. The names of these peaks, other than Prospectors, are my own. Thus named in keeping with the mining theme.

In the first half to mid 1900s miners would walk from Old Town Valdez up to the historic Ramsey-Rutherford mining area via the Valdez Glacier. Back then, there wasn't really a Valdez Glacier Lake, the glacier itself was miles longer and several hundred feet higher, and there was much less brush (due to the glacier being higher and this being a century earlier than now in terms of anthropogenic climate change impacts which has significantly increased lower elevation vegetation growth in this part of the Chugach).

All of this made accessing the alpine of the Ramsey-Rutherford area significantly less involved than it is today. That being said, those old miners were stout folk. Walking from Old Town, with heavy mining gear and uncomfortable (by today's standards) clothing and footwear, was still not an easy proposition despite much easier access to the alpine than there is today.

Today, reaching this area entails paddling across the iceberg laden Valdez Glacier Lake: a maze of which varies in difficulty. On our paddle in, it was straightforward. But, after a few hot summer days, our exit was considerably more challenging as the glacier had calved off many tons (literally) of new icebergs.

The next step in the journey is hiking up the Valdez Glacier, which is relatively straightforward until reaching the NW corner of the Prospectors Massif (below Abercrombie Mountain) where the transition from glacier to land begins. The glacier here is very cracked up and, although just a short distance to navigate, it's a challenging maze to get off the glacier proper.

Once off the blue ice of the glacier, the transition starts with a difficult scramble up ice slopes covered with boulders, talus, and scree. Objective danger is high here considering the unstable ground (both for footing and precariously situated rock). The next challenge is navigating from these ice-rock slopes to the solid ground of the rock slabs that provide passage to the alpine. These rock slabs require class 3-4 scrambling which would be outright dangerous if wet. While a route to the alpine can be pieced together without much, if any, bushwhacking the thick brush is difficult to avoid and bear density in the area is typical of Valdez: very high. Once above brush line, the difficulty of the final approach to the Ramsey-Rutherford area eases significantly to class 2-3 hiking.

The Ramsey-Rutherford historic mining area itself is pleasantly mellow tundra with some of the best camping and scenery in all of Alaska, if not the world. While most that choose to visit this area in the future will fly-in via helicopter, it is accessible from the road system. It's as or more spectacular than any area I've been to in AK, including areas that are fly-in only like the



Arrigetch Peaks in Gates of the Arctic National Park and any place in Wrangell-St. Elias or Lake Clark national parks.

In July 2022 my partner, Jess [Tran], and I spent four days and three nights accessing the Ramsey-Rutherford area from the road system and then climbing three of the four prominent summits of the Prospectors Massif (Siltstone, Prospectors, and Sourdough). In March 2023, I climbed (and skied) Cheechako Peak in a six hour day trip from the road system via Camicia Creek. As this is the most distant peak of the Prospectors Massif, this day trip was a clear testament as to how much faster and more efficient snowpack and skis can make backcountry travel in AK.

The first day of our July 2022 trip was spent on the approach to the Ramsey Rutherford area and setting up our base camp for the next couple days of climbing. The second day Jess and I climbed Prospectors via its west ridge. The final bit, from the false summit to the true summit, required a rappel and low 5th class climbing. We then continued along the 3rd-4th class ridge line to Sourdough.

From Sourdough, we descended the glacier to the NW (which is significantly crevassed and much of it above firn line – I took one partial fall into a superficially snow-covered crevasse where the NW face of Sourdough becomes less steep). We then traversed steep, and sometimes exposed, north facing slopes between 3000-3500' back to our camp in the the Ramsey-Rutherford mining area.

The next day Jess hung out around camp while I climbed Siltstone, a third class scramble, via its east ridge. On day four we exited.

I had hoped the exit would be straightforward, given I'd dialed in a line from the alpine back to the Valdez Glacier that avoided any bushwhacking. We also had already done the paddle across the lake. However, straightforward was not to be the case.

We exited the alpine and made it back to the toe of the Valdez glacier cleanly and quickly but, after three days of mid-summer sun and heat the Glacier Lake was riddled with new icebergs big and small. The toe of the Valdez Glacier is very unstable in such conditions, a chunk of which collapsed while I was positioning our packrafts for entry. Luckily I had my PFD on so only got soaked from the waist down, but the water of this lake is COLD even on the hottest days of summer. What took us only about an hour to paddle on the way in, took us a few hours on the way out given how constricted of a maze the lake had become with new icebergs freshly calved off of the Valdez Glacier.

Finally, we made it back to the parking lot. Having completed an absolutely full-value Alaskan multi-sport adventure. More photos and video available at [chugachsnow.org/ramsey-rutherford-historic-mining-area-mountaineering/](http://chugachsnow.org/ramsey-rutherford-historic-mining-area-mountaineering/)



*Top: Ruins of the Ramsey–Rutherford Mine.*

*Middle: View up the Valdez Glacier.*

*Bottom: Jess Tran on the Valdez Glacier.*



## Peak of the Month: Claxton Peak (10130 feet), Saint Elias Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Saint Elias Mountains

**Borough:** Unorganized Borough

**Drainages:** Jefferies Glacier and Logan Glacier

**Latitude/Longitude:** 60° 42' 21" North, 141° 26' 22" West

**Elevation:** 10130 (±30) feet

**Adjacent Peaks:** Peak 9656 in the Jefferies Glacier and Logan Glacier drainages, Peak 9172 in the Logan Glacier drainage, Peak 9020 in the Logan Glacier drainage, and Three-Faced Peak (9560 feet)

**Distinctness:** 1020 feet from Peak 9656

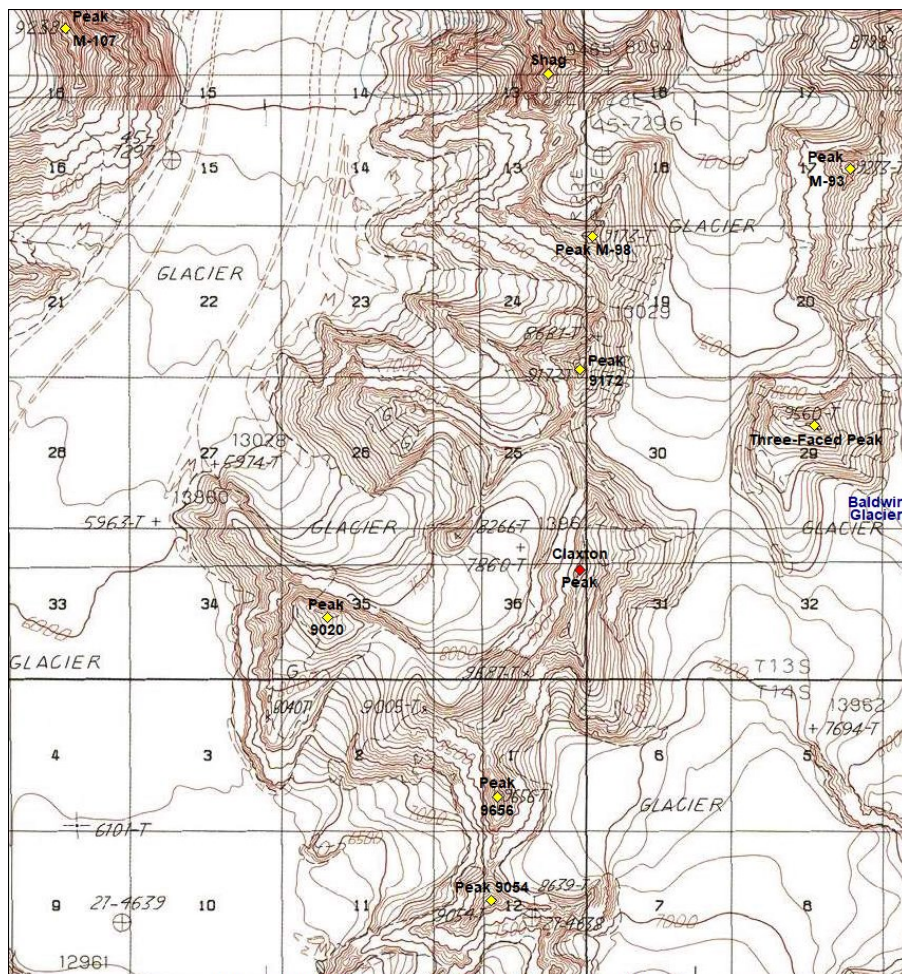
**Prominence:** 2280 feet from Flight Path Peak (10420 feet)

**USGS Maps:** 1:63,360: Bering Glacier (C-2), 1:25,000: Bering Glacier C-2 NE

**First Recorded Ascent:** May 2003 by Geoff Gardiner, Wendy Gardiner, Peter Inglis, Chris Pilaro, Mark Puleio, Aaron Rodriguez, Francie St. Onge, and Joe St. Onge

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** South ridge

**Access Point:** Upper Baldwin Glacier



Map created with TOPO!® ©2003 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

Claxton Peak is the 341<sup>st</sup> highest peak in Alaska and the 156<sup>th</sup> highest peak in the portion of the Saint Elias Mountains that is in Alaska.

In May 2003, Paul Claus flew Geoff Gardiner, Wendy Gardiner, PI Inglis, Chris Pilaro, Mark Puleio, Aaron Rodriguez, Francie St. Onge, and Joe St. Onge from Chitina to Ultima Thule Lodge, sited north of the Chitina River and south of MacColl Ridge. From there Claus flew the Sun Valley Trekking party to the upper Baldwin Glacier, where they established a base camp.

From their base camp, the team booted up the south ridge of Claxton Peak and then telemark skied its east face.

During their trip the team also climbed and skied Berwick Peak (9978 feet) in the Jefferies Glacier drainage, Mount Emily (8963 feet) in the Baldwin Glacier drainage, Peak M-93 (9273 feet), Peak M-98 (9173 feet), Mount Mildred (10150 feet) in the Jefferies Glacier drainage, Peak 8993 in the Baldwin Glacier drainage, Peak 9172 in the Logan Glacier drainage, Peak 9180 in the Logan Glacier drainage of the Granite Range, Three-Faced Peak, and Wendy Peak (9490 feet) in the Jefferies Glacier

drainage.

In 2008 Joe St. Onge returned to the upper Baldwin Glacier with another Sun Valley Trekking party, which he guided up the south ridge of Claxton Peak.

I don't know of a third ascent of Claxton Peak.

Bivouac.com reported that the peak's name was derived from Claxton Castle, which is in Claxton in South Norfolk in the East of England. The origin of the name *Claxton* is uncertain, but may have been derived from "Clacc's settlement" or "Klakk's settlement." In Old English, a *clacc* meant a hill or a peak.

The information for this column came from bivouac.com's webpage on Claxton Peak (<https://bivouac.com/MtnPg.asp?MtnId=35755>), from the University of Nottingham's website "Key to English Place-Names" (<http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/map/place/Yorkshire%20NR/Claxton>), and from my correspondence with Joe St. Onge.

# Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

April 26, 2023, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at 500 W. International Airport Rd., Anchorage

## Roll Call

Gerrit Verbeek (President) – Present  
*Vice President (Vacant)*  
Donell Irwin (Secretary) – Present  
Peter Taylor (Treasurer) – Present  
Tom McIntyre (Director) – Absent

Andrew Holman (Director) – Present  
Matt Nedom (Director) – Present  
Heather Johnson (Director) – Present  
Andy Kubic (Director) – Present  
Scott Parmelee (Director) - Present

Scribe: Donell

## Announcements

- Welcome new Scree Editor Amy Coleman.
- Still looking for a Vice President for the club.

## Board Reports and Discussion

- **Finances:** Financial report is on budget. Nothing exceptional to report.
- **General Membership:**
  - Need a volunteer to help direct membership questions (Donell volunteered to help with this).
  - Discussed membership numbers, ways to determine out of state members and ways to retain members
  - Discussed tools to reach out to members.
  - Discussed zoom password/link issues and importance of keeping up zoom option for meetings.
  - Discussed preliminary results from membership survey.
  - Discussed needing safety waiver back online.
- **Huts:**
  - Preliminary results of membership survey show support for expanding the Mint Hut
- **Trips and Training:**
  - Approved and scheduled Summer Solstice Flattop Hike for Wednesday June 21, 2023.
  - Discussed summer trips and training, several volunteers have offered to teach and help.
  - Discussed needing volunteers to help reach out and organize, schedule and sign up students.
  - Discussed options to get more things scheduled.
- **Speakers and Outreach:**
  - Discussed being more vocal at meetings and assertive online about recruiting people.
  - Discussed the production of our speaker videos and audio equipment needed.
  - Discussed using funds from fundraiser for more high profile speakers in the future
- **General Discussion:**
  - Began discussion on Peter's scope document for paid MCA position, grant funding, and checked articles of incorporation to see if this is permitted.

## Board Votes

- Approved scheduling the September membership vote for paid position
- Email vote after meeting to approve refundable deposits for trips/training to reduce last minute cancellations.
- Approved moving forward with Valdez Chapter

## Action Items

- Andy: Does Memberspace send prompts to members when it's time to renew?
- Need a volunteer to help direct membership questions (Donell volunteered to help with this).
- Donell/Peter: Discussed how to enter membership for a person who pays cash/check in person.
- Donell: Help schedule and coordinate volunteers and students for training
- Scott: look into scripts to help automate updating membership lists for emailing Scree

## Time and location of next meeting

- General Meeting - Wednesday May 3rd, 2023, BP Energy Center
- Next Board Meeting on May 31, 2023, 500 W. Int'l Airport Rd.



## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President        Gerrit Verbeek        [president@mtnclubak.org](mailto:president@mtnclubak.org)  
Vice-President    Rebecca Marks        [vicepresident@mtnclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtnclubak.org)  
Secretary        Donell Irwin        [secretary@mtnclubak.org](mailto:secretary@mtnclubak.org)  
Treasurer        Peter Taylor        [treasurer@mtnclubak.org](mailto:treasurer@mtnclubak.org)  
Director 1 (term expires in 2023)    Heather Johnson    [board@mtnclubak.org](mailto:board@mtnclubak.org)  
Director 2 (term expires in 2023)    Andy Kubic        [board@mtnclubak.org](mailto:board@mtnclubak.org)  
Director 3 (term expires in 2023)    Scott Parmelee    [board@mtnclubak.org](mailto:board@mtnclubak.org)  
Director 4 (term expires in 2024)    Andrew Holman    [board@mtnclubak.org](mailto:board@mtnclubak.org)  
Director 5 (term expires in 2024)    Matt Nedom        [board@mtnclubak.org](mailto:board@mtnclubak.org)  
Director 6 (term expires in 2024)    Tom McIntyre      [board@mtnclubak.org](mailto:board@mtnclubak.org)

Annual membership dues: Basic ("Dirtbag") \$20, Single \$30, Family \$40

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org).

*The Scree* is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes, and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com). Material should be submitted by the 11th of the month to appear in the next month's *Scree*.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to [vicepresident@mtnclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtnclubak.org).

Missing your MCA membership card? Stop by the monthly meeting to pick one up or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

Mailing list/database entry: Peter Taylor, [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org)  
Hiking and Climbing Committee: *Vacant*—[training@mtnclubak.org](mailto:training@mtnclubak.org)  
Huts: Scott Parmelee or [huts@mtnclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtnclubak.org)  
Calendar: Lexi Trainer  
Librarian: Gwen Higgins—[library@mtnclubak.org](mailto:library@mtnclubak.org)  
*Scree* Editor: *Vacant* — [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org)  
Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.io/g/MCAK>.

*Eagle Glacier from a distance at sunset, July 18, 2023. Photo by Frank Baker.*

Mountaineering Club of Alaska  
Box 243561  
Anchorage, AK 99524-3561